

NCBD News

NCBD Launches Electronic Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of NCBD's new electronic newsletter! The purpose of the newsletter is to:

- update participants on current activities
- disseminate periodic updates on the status of research projects
- facilitate use of the reports and/or data by highlighting how sponsors have used the data
- respond to technical issues
- announce meetings and conferences.

We plan to produce several issues of the newsletter each year. Please e-mail ncbd1@westat.com with your comments or suggestions for the newsletter (the mailbox will be operational on May 15th).

NCBD Update

Sponsor informational packets were mailed out in late March. Everyone should have received a packet but the last name may have been incorrect. We apologize for the confusion and have resent corrected packages to all affected sponsors. The packets include:

- Letter of Agreement
- Data Submission Specifications
- Sponsor Project Profile Form
- Schedule for Phase Three Data Submission and Reports
- Other general information about NCBD

Anyone who hasn't received a packet should notify Emily Sullivan at ncbd1@westat.com.

Please sign and return the letters of agreement by **May 30th**. Also, complete the sponsor project profile form to ensure prompt delivery of the electronic newsletter.

NCBD E-mailbox

We have created one e-mailbox for NCBD questions and issues: ncbd1@westat.com. This electronic mailbox will be operational on **May 15th**. Please send all of your NCBD questions and issues to this address and the appropriate team member will respond.

Revised Data Specifications

NCBD has revised the data submission process for Phase Three. The changes are described below:

- 1) The data specifications are available on the NCBD web site at <http://www.cahps-sun.org/SUNSite/NCBD/ncbd.htm>. Sponsors and plans should download the applicable files for their use.
- 2) The data specifications have been slightly modified to ensure compatibility with NCQA's CAHPS® 2.0H data specifications. Please note that NCBD accepts both CAHPS 2.0 and 2.0H data.
- 3) To encourage complete reporting, we've simplified the health plan characteristics data elements.

Questions regarding the data submission process should be directed to the NCBD mailbox at ncbd1@westat.com.

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NCBD Phase Three Timeline

The project team has set the following target dates for the distribution of benchmark reports:

➤ *Commercial*

Data submission: **August 1, 2000**

Report distribution: October 31, 2000

➤ *Medicaid*

Data submission: **September 1, 2000**

Report distribution: November 30, 2000

NCBD Annual Report

We will release NCBD's first Annual Report this summer. The report will present a broad overview of CAHPS® results and will feature information on the composition of the database, response rates, results by sector, updates on research projects and a description of NCBD products. The Annual Report will be widely distributed to all NCBD participants, policy makers and others.

Research Highlights

In this feature, we will highlight the status and findings of some of the research projects underway using the CAHPS® data.

At the CAHPS® research meeting in Maryland on March 10, 2000, Leo S. Morales presented findings from a study conducted by RAND researchers that compared patient ratings from four race/ethnic groups. Researchers used NCBD 1.0 data to assess differences in results between whites and members of other race-ethnic groups controlling for age, sex, education and health status.

The researchers found that for the global ratings, whites and other race-ethnic groups gave similar

responses. For the composites, the researchers reported that whites tended to report better experiences with care. The study concluded that when patients are asked to rate their health care, differences between race-ethnic groups are less common but when patients are asked to report about specific health care experiences, race-ethnic differences emerge.

An abstract of this study as well as others presented at the March CAHPS® Research Conference will be available on the CAHPS® Survey Users Network web site at www.cahps-sun.org.

Sponsor Spotlight: Washington State

In this feature, we plan to share sponsor's experience using CAHPS® data. We've heard from many of you that it would be useful to know how others have used or are planning to use the information from the NCBD reports. In our introductory issue, Mary Uyeda shares how the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) has used CAHPS® data.

The HCA administers programs that assist over half a million state residents to receive health care coverage. These include the Public Employees Benefits Board program for current and retired public employees; the Basic Health program for lower income residents not eligible for Medicare; and Community Health Services that provides support for 32 community clinics around the state.

The HCA's consumer information project produces information for enrollees to use when making plan enrollment decisions. The state conducted CAHPS surveys in 1997 and 1999 for the employee group and produced written and electronic reports with the results. Over the course of this experience, HCA's contracted

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health plans have begun using CAHPS surveys because of the 1999 merger with NCQA's Member Satisfaction Survey. The HCA discovered that nearly all the contracted plans use CAHPS surveys with their commercial enrollees, and that plan samples usually included HCA sponsored enrollees. In addition, HCA found that the plan-level commercial survey results are quite similar to the HCA program-specific surveys. Therefore, for 2001 HCA has decided not to conduct a separate survey and will require plans to submit their plan-level commercial CAHPS results which the Agency will use to produce consumer reports.

In addition to this efficiency improvement, the HCA used the data for the following purposes:

➤ *Reporting to Consumers*

The HCA created written and electronic consumer reports, showing comparative plan results to help public employees select a health plan. To view the 1999 report, visit their web site at www.wa.gov/hca/CAHPS/index.htm.

➤ *Internal Management*

The HCA has used the NCBD data to inform senior management about the performance of Washington State health plans. With NCBD data, staff demonstrated that plan performance in the state was in many cases similar to the same plan's performance in the NCBD's cross-market comparisons. For example, 1999 CAHPS® data demonstrated that Washington state plans generally scored low in customer service, but that plans overall scored low on this measure.

➤ *Collaboration with Plans*

Having the NCBD data also allowed the HCA to definitively demonstrate that Washington state plans had opportunities for improving their customer service. In 2000, the HCA has declared interest in plan performance on customer service by noting this issue in the annual Request for Proposals. Building on their collaborative

relationship with plans, the agency has expressed its willingness to assist plans with strategies for improving customer service.

For the future, the HCA plans to have an interactive, electronic decision support tool for consumers in 2001 that would include CAHPS®, HEDIS® and other measures of plan performance.

If you have a story to share, please contact ncbd1@westat.com (mailbox will be operational on May 15th).

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